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Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force Report charts new direction for Michigan recycling

LANSING — Local recycling programs would receive a much-needed boost and retailers would have time to prepare for any expansion of the state's beverage container law under recommendations released today by the Michigan Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force.

The recommendations, the culmination of nearly 10 months of work, outline one of the most comprehensive recycling efforts to be undertaken by any state, and are the first in-depth review of Michigan's beverage container law since it was initiated by voters in 1976.

"The Citizens' Agenda: An Action Plan to Improve Recycling and the Beverage Container Law," recommends more than 40 legislative proposals aimed at increasing Michigan's recycling rate. Currently at 20 percent, it is among one of the worst in the nation and dead last among neighboring Great Lakes states. Another recommendation is for a statewide advisory council to consider structural and funding-related issues created by the beverage container law before mandating its expansion.

"The recommendations of the report are very important and will go a long way to encourage and support a renewed recycling effort in Michigan," said Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Twp). "We need to get to the top of the recycling list."

Commissioned by Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, the task force held nine public hearings across Michigan to guide the deliberations of the task force.

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Highlights of more than 40 proposed legislative initiatives made in the task force's recommendation include:

- creating a new Recycling Advisory Council in Michigan law to guide future recycling programs and ensure that the state maintains an aggressive stance on recycling;
- adding a new \$3 per ton surcharge on certain solid waste in order to generate more than \$50 million annually in funding for local recycling programs;
- staging a statewide anti-litter campaign and promoting other educational efforts to instill a recycling ethic in Michigan residents;
- enacting a new strategy for more landfill bans as an incentive to recycle and a way to further control the type of solid waste entering landfills;
- crafting a series of tax credits to spur recycling investment and helping to create new markets for recycled products.

Sikkema praised the work of the task force, acknowledging the importance of restoring Michigan's leadership in this important environmental issue.

Task force members also were quick to point out that new directions are called for in improving the state's current beverage container law, otherwise known as the bottle deposit law.

A full copy of the report can be obtained online at: www.senate.michigan.gov/gop

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